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TRANSCRIPT OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S NEWS CONFERENCE

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EXCERPTED

Recent Spying Incidents

I would like to turn, if I might, to the subject of the recent spy scandals and ask you a two-part question. Do a string of West German defections mean that the United States must cut back the amount of sensitive information it shares with NATO? And secondly, does the Walker spy scandal in the United States suggest to you that perhaps we should reduce the Soviet presence in this country?

We've always been aware of the fact that the Soviets have, undoubtedly, more agents in this country than any personnel that we had in theirs. This has been very much on our minds. I don't know just how you can evaluate what might have been compromised. The Walker case somehow doesn't seem to look as big as it did a short time ago now with what we've seen happening in the other countries.

I think that if there is—if there has been damage, it's been done already with what they could have conveyed both ways in this. You know, England, at the same time, has got the defectors from the KGB that have now come to them with information that certainly must make a lot of agents throughout the world wonder when they are going to feel a tap on their shoulder. And we just have to play with this the best we can and hope that, together, and between us all, we can establish some means of identifying better those who are loyal.

Could I follow up on that and ask again the first part of the question—that is, whether you feel that now, given these defections in West Germany, that perhaps it's time for us to reevaluate just how much information we share with some of our allies in Europe?

I think there's reevaluating that's going on all over the world on that, and I'm sure here, too.

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